

F I N A L R E P O R T

"WOMEN BEHIND THE VEIL"

A Project of
Muslim Community Services
in collaboration with the
Peel Health Department, and
Addiction research Foundation

Funded by: Ministry of Community and Social Services, Peel

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION:

The Muslim Community Services (MCS) is a non profit community based social service agency serving the needs of Muslims within the Region of Peel and vicinity.

MCS has programs for youth, women and seniors and services are provided in many languages including Urdu, Gujrati, Arabic, Farsi and Punjabi. The multi-lingual staff offers information and referral services on UIC, Welfare, OAS, housing, family violence, child care, education, the legal and police systems and more. Assistance is provided through initial assessment, escort services, interpretation, translation, filling forms, case management, referrals and enquiry.

The MCS is a contact point for immigrants, refugees, and new Canadians facing difficulties. MCS has support groups that provide opportunities to meet their peers, support counselling and increase their knowledge on the resources available thus developing a support network within the community.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT:

MCS developed a project called "Women Behind the Veil" in collaboration with the Peel Health Department (PHD) and the Addiction Research Foundation (ARF).

This project was developed to reach out to the abused Muslim women within the community. The project was designed to use culturally appropriate strategies for hard to reach abused women. The project provided support counselling, information, referral, assessment, case management, escort, education and peer support to Muslim women.

Through our aggressive outreach strategy we were successful in reaching" women behind the veil " who were isolated at home and do not venture out on their own. The outreach strategy included presentations not only on ethnic radio and television but also on Cable Ten in Mississauga, distribution of flyers to places frequented by Muslim women such as Libraries, Peel Board schools, Doctors offices, Mosques, grocery stores. Further more, articles were written in many ethnic newspapers - articles also appeared in Toronto Star and Guardian. Presentations were designed to culturally sensitize the staff of mainstream agencies. A special presentation was made to the Islamic Medical Association regarding the services available through MCS.

The outreach strategy was not only designed to reach the

women in abusive situations but also raised the level of consciousness in the Muslim community regarding women abuse through diffusion. The feedback received was very positive in nature. This strategy resulted in increased number of women seeking direct and indirect help. Many other cultural, social and religious organizations in the community have also become sensitive to the needs of abused women. This resulted in increased awareness of the impact of violence on the family and children thus breaking the cycle of violence.

The role of the PHD and ARF were to use community development approaches to address the issue of violence against women and children in the Muslim community. The approaches were designed a) to educate and train staff of MCS and b) to sensitize the mainstream agencies regarding the women abuse issues in the Muslim community.

Another success of this project is the formation of the support group for abused women. The support group meets once a month during the day. The women use this opportunity to network, socialize, educate themselves, and become knowledgeable regarding availability of services. The women are now beginning to use the concept of 'self help' to help themselves. In this group, the issues and topics of interest are decided by the women themselves and the project worker makes arrangements for appropriate speakers to come.

ACHIEVEMENTS :

- . 73 abused women on the case load as of March 1994. Our initial projection was 36 abused women.
- . A support group for women
- . 2 cultural sensitivity and awareness workshops for the Peel Health Department staff and other service providers
- . 2 presentations to health professionals and service providers
- . Train the trainer sessions on the LINK between substance abuse and family violence
- . MCS staff training regarding counselling, case management, confidentiality and follow-up
- . 4 trained volunteers, who can be relied upon to provide support to abused women
- . 2 radio presentations
- . 1 television presentation
- . several articles in the print media accessed by the Muslim population and community at large
- . Over 100,000 people from the muslim community were accessed through the use of media
- . Raised debate on the issue of family violence within the community
- . DAIL tapes and brochures on substance abuse produced in Urdu by the ARF

- . Stronger linkages with mainstream service providers i.e., PHD, ARF, Peel Memorial Hospital, Law Enforcement professionals, and Shelters

CHALLENGES:

SERVICE DELIVERY

- . To design intervention strategies to overcome cultural barriers that prevent women from taking the necessary actions to eliminate abuse;
- . To remove barriers of culture and lack of understanding of rights which inhibit access of services;

OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

- . To develop outreach strategies which in spite of fiscal restraints have to be effective;
- . To overcome community backlash when attempting to raise the women abuse issue to the forefront;

PRESENTATIONS

- . To meet the growing demands of mainstream organizations regarding the training of their staff in women abuse from a Muslim perspective;

TRAIN THE TRAINERS

- . To enhance the skills and knowledge of the front line staff to recognize the LINK between substance abuse and family violence;

PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

- . To effectively use media to educate the community regarding women abuse and family violence in general;
- . To set up a (support group) forum for women to meet;

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

- . To develop a core group of volunteers to assist the project worker in addressing the needs of the abused women;
- . To require/demand/insist/direct the shelter workers to work in unison with the staff of MCS;

STRENGTHS OF THE PROJECT:

- . The development of a service delivery model which is culturally appropriate;
- . The way we address the women abuse issue in the Muslim community may not be the same in the mainstream community;
- . The value system, culture, and the sanctity of the family is respected. The client is made aware of her rights as a Muslim and also of her rights in Canada and is encouraged to make choices based on this awareness. The knowledge of rights does lead to informed decision making on part of the women. The decisions have been less 'relapsing' in nature;
- . This project has combined the interventionist, community development, and preventive approach to address the women abuse in the Muslim community. The results have been very positive as outlined in the achievements section.

RECOMMENDATIONS :

- . Ongoing funding needed to serve abused Muslim women
- . Develop a guide for health professionals and service providers to address the needs of the abused Muslim women
- . More workshops for mainstream professionals to train and increase understanding of the Muslim Way of Life and culture sensitivity issues
- . More training for frontline staff
- . Ongoing volunteer development training and coordination needed
- . Ethnic media be used for effective outreach
- . Continued use of community development approach to educate, reach out on the issues of family violence

2. SERVICE DELIVERY:

INTRODUCTION:

To provide culturally appropriate services to abused Muslim women. The 'Case Management' or 'treatment plan' consisted of the following factors:

- 2a. identification and assessment
- 2b. support counselling (includes mediation and support groups)
- 2c. information, referral and access to services

Each of these factors have been elaborated to explain the process of service delivery.

2.a. Identification and Assessment

Method and Activities:

MCS is a community based service delivery agency. Many clients access this agency through self referrals, referrals by other agencies, telephone queries, or walk-ins. The project worker needs to be skilled in the area of problems identification and making an assessment.

The project worker has identified the following problems and made initial assessments of the cases as follows:

Statistics of the caseload: (PLEASE ADD STATS)

- . Queries to MCS by women and family members seeking more information about the programs and services available;
- . Personal visits to the centre
- . Met clients at the shelter
- . At the client's place of work
- . Met at shopping malls
- . Visit at home

- . Calls/drop-in for other service and subsequent identification of abuse
- . Identification of abuse and subsequent delivery of appropriate services

The assessments and treatment plan were developed for 73 women.

In 50% of the cases referrals were made to address the following needs:

- . Shelters
- . Social services
- . LINC
- . Doctors
- . Legal
- . Housing

In addition, referrals to MCS were also made by Peel Health, Doctors, family members, community leaders and other professionals.

Challenges:

- . Client's initial hesitation to take direct action
- . Cultural barriers that prevent her from taking necessary actions
- . Her rights and the ignorance of Canadian laws and Islamic rights and responsibilities
- . Fear of losing children
- . Overcoming stigma from family and community members
- . Backlash of being identified as weak and not a good wife - intolerant and supportive of the family
- . Fatalism (Martyr Syndrome)
- . Putting herself last over husband, children, in laws, family and community

Indicators of Success:

- . The women do empower themselves, make choices and act upon them;
- . The successes include women taking control of their lives and making choices i.e.:
 - . leave abusive husbands
 - . reduce the impact of abuse on themselves and children
 - . improve familial relationships
 - . improve health and self esteem
 - . willingness to learn new things

- . The women do overcome their initial hesitation and seek help;
- . In many cases they have increased their knowledge of women's rights under the Canadian law and the Islamic Way of Life;
- . Many women have joined English classes and have upgraded existing skills or learned new ones through volunteer opportunities;
- . seek part-time employment.

Conclusion and Results:

The case load has increased from 25 to 73. The expected case load was 36 cases.

Many women had come forward as a result of the outreach and media campaign. Variety of interventions were sought by women. The project worker assisted the women:

- . to get custody of the children
- . to get their belongings
- . to get accommodation and in some cases refer to a shelter
- . to apply for welfare
- . to initiate a mediation process on the request of the client
- . to start self improvement courses

Recommendations:

(Dev to come up with recommendations in all the sections)

2.b. Support Counselling

Method and Activities:

Supportive counselling was provided to the women over the phone, in person (one on one) and in a group setting indirectly. In addition, support groups are available for these women to socialize and increase their understanding of the women abuse issues i.e., health, impact of abuse on the family and children, stress, resources available. The support group provides these women with an opportunity to vent their frustrations and anger in a non-threatening environment.

Challenges and Indicators of Success:

Challenges faced by abused women are:

- . to overcome Fatalism
- . to overcome Shame and Stigma (from community and family)
- . to deal with the unrealistic expectations (the expectation that the project worker will 'magically' patch up the family together)
- . to establish a level of trust and reassurance regarding the confidentiality of counselling
- . to sell the idea of establishing support group for women. The challenges were removing barriers such as distance and finding a suitable time for all women to meet. The challenge also included to strive a balance between fun, information, awareness, and education related activities.

Indicators of success:

3 women felt comfortable enough to express their views regarding the significance and importance of the International Year of the Family on Regional Chairman Emil Kolb's television show.

Conclusion/Results:

Increase of caseload from 25 to 73

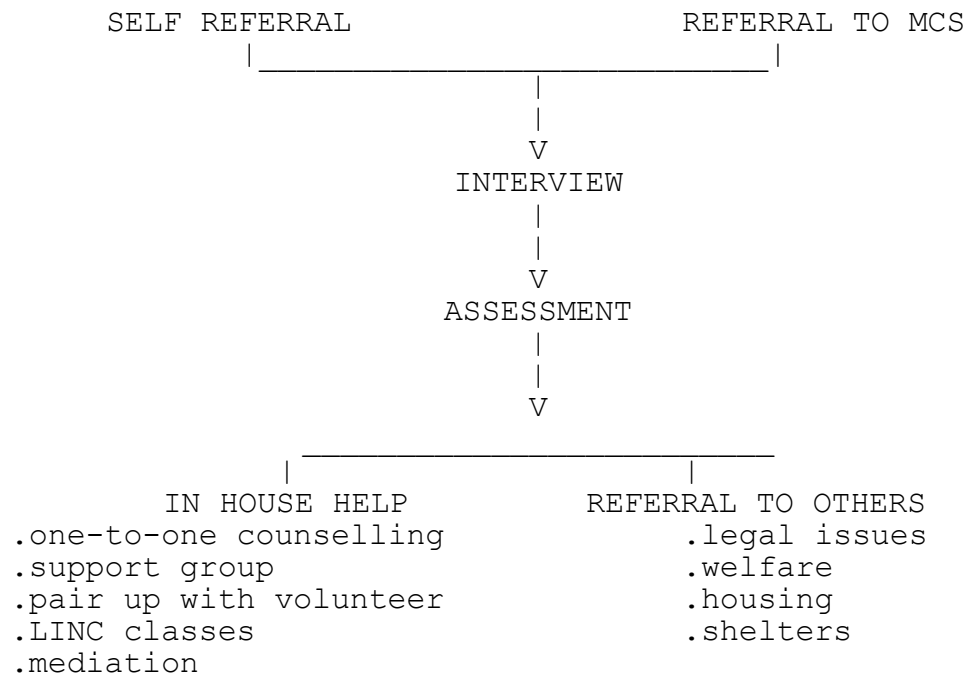
The number of clients on active supportive counselling list is 53

2.c. Information and Referral

Method and Activities:

The objectives in this section were:

- . to sensitively provide information and make referrals for those clients who cannot be served at the Centre.
- Each client that seeks intervention goes through the following steps:



Statistics

- referred to legal aid
- referred to welfare
- referred to non profit housing
- referred to LINC classes and other institutions
- referred to shelter

Challenges:

Long waiting lists for housing
Insensitive lawyers and police
Overworked and busy welfare workers
No adequate job referrals especially for those with no
canadian experience
Rigid immigration laws
Abused women who are new immigrants find it doubly difficult
because the system victimises them further

Indicators of Success:

Referrals were provided to the MCS by Peel Health, Peel
memorial Hospital, Doctors, family members, and community
leaders. The project is becoming well known in the community.

Recommendations:

3. OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

In the past, MCS had tried to use the newspapers to reach out to the abused women. The first time when an advertisement was placed, the religious and community leaders were outraged and denied abuse ever happening in the Muslim community. The second time, when an advertisement was placed in the newspaper the leaders demanded that the newspaper be removed from the Mosques. Therefore, MCS had to design a media campaign that would not only reach out to the abused women but would also be sensitive enough for the leaders to accept.

The outreach strategy was designed to reach women and community members who maybe aware of abused women, who traditionally would not access services. It would not be incorrect to say that in our community there are women who for various reasons are not able to access services. Some reasons are:

- . They do not even recognize the various forms of abuse,;
- . They are not familiar with the 'Canadian' service delivery system;
- . They are isolated with no family support;
- . The community and religious leaders are men - it is they who demand compliance from women. Women who seek help are often blamed and ostracised for not trying hard enough to make the marriage work. The women are blamed for becoming too 'western' and are told to return to their husbands and try to improve and adjust. Often, these leaders have misinterpreted Islamic jurisprudence to validate abuse.
- . Lack of knowledge of services, language difficulty, shame, stigma, and community backlash make it an arduous and formidable task of seeking help.

The campaign consisted of accessing media i.e. Radio, Television, Print media. Flyers and 'word of mouth' were also some of the other strategies used to develop information and awareness to the Muslim community.

3.a. Print Media

Method and Activities:

Articles were written with a purpose to inform the Muslim community regarding:

- a) what services are provided to the abused women by the Brampton Muslim Community Centre (BMCC), in Brampton?
- b) the extent and history of wife abuse in the Muslim community; what are their rights?; and what can they do in case they are abused?

The following newspapers agreed to have our articles published. And these are: Muslim News and Views, Toronto Star, Star India, Brampton Guardian, East Meets West, Arab and Afghani newspapers. Please see appendix ...

The outreach strategy also included distributing of the flyers on services and programs available at MCS. The flyers also included information on the project 'Women Behind the Veil' and information on the support group for women. These flyers were designed to provide information regarding the availability to services to the abused women and the community at large. These flyers were distributed at the Muslim grocery stores, Video stores, Libraries, Peel Board schools, Doctors' offices, and Mosques. The total number of flyers printed and distributed were 2000 .

In addition, volunteers and other 'well wishers' of the Brampton Muslim community Centre were eager to spread the word around that help is available for abused Muslim women.

Indicators of Success:

Muslim community is a very diverse community. Muslims come from many different countries and speak many languages i.e., Arabic, Afghani, Farsi, Urdu, Punjabi, and English. Recognizing this diversity we were able to get in touch with many newspapers and magazines that were willing to have the articles about the issue of family violence printed.

The articles resulted in increased awareness of the services available, increased agency profile and lead to increased use of services by the abused women and the community at large.

3.b. Radio and Television

The immediate impact of the radio and television shows was that the number of women accessing our Centre has increased. Right after the shows, two muslim women were referred to the shelters. Five other women were provided help and are on the worker's direct case load. Total number of calls received after the shows were thirty five.

Challenges:

The challenges were that this is a very expensive method of reaching out to the community. But, it is an innovative and a very effective method of reaching the Muslim community.

Indicators of success:

This outreach strategy resulted in making the MCS more known in the community, thereby increasing the number of Muslims accessing the Centre for services.

Conclusion/Results:

- . media in particular radio and television is an effective medium to reach the Muslim community;
- . the results show that after the radio and television the number of calls to the MCS increased and more women accessed the Centre
- . immediate cases were identified and looked after by MCS

.Recommendations:

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.a. Joint Presentations by Peel Health Department and Muslim Community Services

Method and Activities:

MCS in collaboration with Peel Health and Addiction Research Foundation designed and developed workshops for mainstream professionals a) to become knowledgeable about the Muslim culture and way of life, b) to learn about women abuse from a Muslim perspective and finally c) to learn practical skills about counselling a muslim client.

Two workshops were held at the Peel Health Department for their staff i.e., Nurses, Front-line staff, Supervisors, and area Managers. The other workshop was organized in the month of November to commemorate Wife Abuse prevention month and about 100 agency representatives attended from various sectors i.e., education, legal, police, mainstream and other service providers, and health professionals.

Statistical information:

Place: Brampton Caledon Office of the Peel Health Department

Date:

Attendees:

Place: Mississauga East Office
Peel Health Department

Date:

Attendees:

Place: 150 Central Parkway Drive
Brampton

Date: November 2, 93

Attendees: 100 agency representatives

Challenges and Indicators of Success:

Seventy people attended the presentations at the Peel Health Department and ninety eight attended the November workshop. Due to the limited seating capacity of the room registration had to be stopped for the November workshop. Other agency representatives have expressed a desire to attend these workshops if we planned it in the near future.

There is a very high demand for cultural sensitive workshops. The challenge is:

- . to find the resources to organizes the workshops;
- . to strike a balance between direct service delivery and prevention and promotion of women abuse issue.

Conclusion/Results:

The evaluations were very positive (See appendix). BMCC is still getting requests to organize more presentations covering the above mentioned agenda.

MCS and Peel Health will be making a presentation to the York Board of Education in April.

Increased awareness among the mainstream agencies regarding our services resulting in more referrals and increased networking and better understanding to facilitate services within their own agencies for the larger community.

Recommendations:

- . Request from Peel Health Department and other service providers to develop a guide which they can use to assist them in dealing more effectively with muslim clients;
- . to continue organizing cultural sensitive training workshops for mainstream organizations;
- . to explore resources for developing a video. Alternate medium has to be explored for cost effective reasons and for addressing the needs of broader community.

4.b. Presentations by Muslim Community Services

Method and Activities:

Muslim community services made presentations to the Peel Mental Health Clinic, to the Annual General Meeting of the Islamic Medical Association, a school in Brampton and have been invited by the Attorney General's office to give two presentations at their courtrooms. In addition, Dufferin Separate School Board extended an invitation to sensitize their staff regarding the Muslim Way of Life.

Statistical Information:

Peel Mental Health Clinic

Date: February 1994

Agenda: The presentation summarized the Muslim Way of Life in relationship to mental health for the clinic staff.

Impact: The staff of the clinic had better understanding of the concept of mental illnesses within the Muslim culture and way of life.

One of the challenges for the Muslim community is to a) understand and recognize effective ways of dealing with stress, b) understand the concept of emotional wellbeing, c) and deal effectively with mental illnesses.

Cardinal Leger Catholic High School

Date: June 1993

Agenda: The presentation centred on Islam and Muslim Way of Life and cultural experiences of youth in Canada.

Impact: The staff and youth were informed regarding the impact of violence on family. It is hoped that both the youth and staff will make use of the

links established by the MCS.

Attorney General's Office

Date: January 1994

Agenda: Legal Issues and Abused Muslim Women

This workshop was requested by the Ministry of the Attorney General. The MCS had requested that some financial remuneration be made by the Attorney General's Office. They declined and the workshop was not organized.

Islamic Medical Association

Date: February 1994

Agenda: Challenges and Issues of Wife Abuse - A Brampton Muslim Community Centres Approach

Attendees: Eighty MD's

This presentation was made at the annual meeting of the Islamic Medical association in February. The intent was:

- . to introduce MCS and its programs and services;
- . to identify and establish contacts with skilled counsellors in the community;
- . to raise the awareness of medical professionals regarding the issue of wife abuse so that they can make referrals to MCS;
- . to encourage the medical professionals to provide support to this project;
- . to assist and support the services and programs of MCS as volunteers.

A small presentation was made by the project worker on the Muslim religious festival "Eid" for the MIAG Christmas meeting

Challenges and Indicators of Success:

Many ongoing calls for help by other agencies increased understanding and sensitivity to the needs of muslims by attendants of our workshops;

How to accommodate requests from mainstream agencies without financial remuneration?

One of the challenge is that the more presentations one does more demand is created. And it is not possible for the

project worker to just organize presentations and not pay attention to other needs of the women.

The activity resulted in increased networking, referrals and awareness.

Conclusion/Results:

Very positive, all the evaluations were extremely encouraging (See appendix).

MCS continues to receive requests to organize more workshops. MCS received an invitation to speak on the radio (Radio Pakistan).

The Muslim youth are publishing a newsletter at the universities called Muslim Voice and have extended an invitation to submit articles on violence against women and children.

Recommendations:

- . More funding
- . More workshops
- . Look at new and innovative ways of delivering information.
- . Explore possibilities for developing a video

5. TRAIN THE TRAINERS

a) Addiction research Foundation:

The Addiction Research Foundation (ARF) and the Peel Health Department have been developing preventive initiatives in the Punjabi community. Now they are looking at other ethno-racial and cultural communities. MCS was approached by these two organizations to assist in their effort to develop culturally appropriate intervention initiatives regarding the issue of substance use.

The research has indicated a strong correlation between substance abuse and family violence. The ARF has designed pre-recorded tape messages on the INFO-ARF LINE in the Punjabi language. These pre-recorded tapes will soon be available in Urdu language and if costs permit will be available in Arabic, Farsi, and Somali languages.

In order to deal with referrals from these pre-recorded tape messages, MCS and other community based agency staff were provided training by ARF in the following areas:

- . how to conduct a telephone interview
- . how to deal with the calls from substance users/abusers
- . how to make proper referrals
- . how to identify crisis calls

b) Peel Health Department

The Peel Health Department (PHD) organized another workshop on the counselling skills for the staff and volunteers of MCS. The following areas were covered:

- . what is confidentiality?

- . how to identify a problem and make assessment, develop a treatment plan, and do the follow-up?
- . the need for proper documentation.

Challenges and Indicators of Success:

The training strengthened the interviewing skills of the staff and volunteers. The workers felt comfortable making identification and assessments on the phone and on one to one basis.

Conclusion/Results:

The skills acquired through the training have helped staff and volunteers to conduct interviews and make assessments in a more professional way.

Another workshop is planned a) to practice the skills of counselling through role plays, and b) to learn case management.

Recommendations:

Avenues are currently being explored to train wife abuse workers especially in the areas of substance abuse and family violence

ARF is exploring the possibility organizing a one day training for service providers to get acquainted with the LINK between family violence and substance abuse

DAIL INFO-TAPES be developed in other languages

6. PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

a) Workshops, media campaign:

Community Development Approach had been incorporated since the beginning of this project. The outreach and awareness campaign, the presentations all incorporate the CD approach. The staff and volunteers of MCS acquired skills in order to effectively serve women in need. The media campaign was designed not only to make the MCS known in the community but also to raise the issue of women abuse so that a dialogue can be started with the community. The prevention and education components were also incorporated in the workshops.

b) Support Groups:

MCS always had a womens' group that meets once a month in the evenings. This group consists of women from mostly stable families and their needs for more social and recreational in nature.

It was determined that the needs of the abused women cannot be met in this support group. Effort was made to establish a support group for these abused women. After considerable effort, a support group for abused women has been established, which meets once a month during the day.

The women have incorporated activities to empower themselves. The activities also include guest speakers and provide a forum to socialize among themselves.

Articles were published in newspaper and magazines. Radio and Television programs were also used to reach out to women.

Challenges and Indicators of Success:

A support group for women has been organized and is meeting once a month during the day. The challenges were to initially bring women by making arrangements of transportation, providing child minding services, provided bus tickets, and volunteers spent a great deal of time encouraging women to participate in the support groups.

The success is that a sense of ownership of the support group exists in the women. They are keen on attending, always suggest topics of interest and are very enthusiastic about learning and meeting new friends.

The use of ethnic media resulted in good exposure of our services.

Conclusion/Results:

The activities have resulted in increased awareness among the muslims regarding woman abuse, including the availability of services and support network.

The cultural appropriate activities have been extremely helpful to the Muslim women. The following sessions were organized at the request of the participants of the support group:

- . health fitness workshop
- . how to recognize and deal with stress?
- . personal care
- . Wife abuse seminar

Recommendations:

More sessions are requested by the women i.e., self esteem, resume writing, job search or reentering workforce, child rearing or parenting skills, youth problems.

7. VOLUNTEER TRAINING

a) Developing Infrastructure within community

The objectives of this activity were to have volunteers who would be able to :

- . meet with women at places of their choice
- . escort women (doctors offices, courts, shopping)
- . volunteers to assist support groups. In addition, the volunteers can provide an opportunity to call after hours, develop friendship and increase social activity for isolated abused women. They may also act as 'sounding boards' for the abused women.

Method and Activities:

The Peel Health Department organized a workshop for MCS staff and volunteers and potential volunteers to address some of the issues around voluntarism. The workshop consisted of the following topics:

- . the importance of volunteering in the Canadian society
- . the importance of nurturing volunteers
- . the importance of recognizing volunteers

Challenges and Indicators of Success:

MCS has a list of twenty nine volunteers and six volunteers come on a consistent basis to help out in the wife abuse program. These volunteers participate in direct service

delivery, group setting, evaluation committee.

Conclusion/Results:

The initial objective has been met. MCS has a core group of volunteers that are reliable and can assume responsibility.

Recommendations:

With such a large base of volunteers a plan is needed to sustain, recruit, develop, train and coordinate volunteers. A volunteer coordinator is needed.

8. EVALUATION

a) Joint Committee Meetings

Method and Activities:

The Joint Committee of representatives from the ARF, PHD, MCS (Board, staff and volunteers) had decided that evaluation be conducted at regular intervals. It was decided to have the evaluation meetings every three months. The meetings were held regularly and the project was reviewed and changes were incorporated to address the deficiencies. The committee met in the months of May, August, November 1993, and March 1994.

Statistical Information:

- . 73 abused women on the case load as of March 1994. Our initial projection was 36 abused women.
- . 1 Support group for women
- . 6 volunteers
- . 2 radio presentations
- . 1 television presentation
- . several articles in the print media accessed by the Muslim population
- . Over 100,000 people from the muslim community were

- accessed through the use of media
- . net worked and attended meetings,
- . organized workshops

Conclusion/Results:

The objectives of this project has not only been achieved but in most of the circumstances they have exceeded.

This partnership model has been highly effective.

The CD approach and direct service delivery approach have been successfully intertwined resulting in a more cohesive, effective, and diversified results.

Recommendations:

At all cost the funding must continue. Ours was the only collaborative service delivery model. Using a multi-faceted approach, this project has been very successful.